



**WisDOT/1,000 Friends of Wisconsin Meeting
Thursday, August 5, 2004 - 9:30-11:00am**

People in attendance

Casey Newman, WisDOT BOP
Steve White, WisDOT, BOP
Ward Lyles, 1,000 Friends

Steve Hiniker, 1,000 Friends
Kevin Pomeroy, 1,000 Friends
Lisa MacKinnon, 1,000 Friends

1. Overview of WisDOT's meeting purpose and WisDOT's long-range plan by WisDOT staff:
The meeting began at 9:30. Casey Newman gave an overview of WisDOT's upcoming long-range transportation plan, *Connections 2030* (C2030). WisDOT is currently seeking input on transportation planning issues from stakeholder groups and larger Wisconsin cities. Plan alternatives should be available for public comment in July of 2005. The plan is scheduled to be completed in 2006.
2. Gathering of input from the 1,000 Friends: Discussion focused on the following issues:
 - a. Upcoming Budget
Concern was raised regarding how the upcoming state budget will effect WisDOT's overall direction. Will services and personnel be cut?
 - b. Communities First
It was noted that "Communities First" is a priority. What will C2030 mean to the people? Transportation projects can impact a community for generations, so efforts must be make the project fit the character of the community (not the other way around). Concern was also raised about the criteria used to rank major projects (is enough emphasis placed on the community impacts?).

1000 Friends supports our current efforts related to Community Sensitive Design. The plan should recognize these policies.
 - c. Fix it First
The concept of "fix it first" is also a high priority (prioritizing all highway maintenance and repair work before funding expansion projects). Wisconsin needs a more balanced transportation system. Land use implications must be considered. A better explanation of highway degradation would be useful. Concern was raised that more money is going into expansion than is reported and more "transparent" system is needed for project-related work.

d. TDM/Transit

The state should consider developing a TDM program for state agencies. There also needs to be a state capital program for transit (intercity and local). Wisconsin should not just rely on federal funding.

The TPC structure should include the review of large-scale projects for all modes.

e. Public Participation

It was asked how the C2030 survey weighted public participation? Surveys are always subjective. The C2030 survey seems to be heavily weighted on highways and not so much on other modes.

f. Connection Between Transportation and Health

The connection between transportation and health is a concern. Issues such as diabetes, obesity, and elderly and disabled concerns were noted. It was asked if WINPAW and the American Heart Association were identified as stakeholders in the C2030 public involvement process.

g. Translinks 21 Spending Levels

A question was raised asking if WisDOT has ever looked at Translinks 21 funding projections versus the actual spending levels since the plan was released.

h. Interconnectedness

Interconnectedness is a priority (Intercity service coordinated with local service so trips can be completed). Discussion should be included in the plan.

i. Elderly and Disabled

Often times, elderly and disabled transportation providers must rely on volunteers to sustain their existence (as opposed to other transportation stakeholders). In the future, there needs to be a more level playing field. There also needs to be more money to support transit agencies when there is a crisis. Additional funding options might include RTAs, TIFs, user fees and other tax options. The aging baby boomer population will push this issue to the forefront during the time frame of the plan.

j. Community Input into C2030

When WisDOT reviews comprehensive plans, what happens when a community does not have a very good plan? How will they provide input into C2030? How does WisDOT obtain information from these communities?

1000 Friends indicated that a series of papers that highlight their transportation positions can be found on their website at: <http://www.1kfriends.org/>.



**1000 FRIENDS
OF WISCONSIN**

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September 7, 2004

Casey Newman
Chief, Strategic Issues Section
Bureau of Planning
Wisconsin Department of Transportation
4802 Sheboygan Ave. Rm 901
PO Box 7813
Madison, WI 53707-7913

Dear Casey,

Thank you for your and Steve White's visit to 1000 Friends of Wisconsin on August 5, 2004 to seek our input in the formative stages of WisDOT's Connections 2030 planning process. I have reviewed your notes on our meeting and am now sending this letter to highlight our main priorities.

First of all, I would like to note that we support WisDOT's decision to work from a policy-based plan rather than a needs-based plan. While detailed plans of specific needs in and across regions are important, it is more important that a set of guided planning principles are established. On the other hand, I am concerned about the apparent double standard in planning exhibited by WisDOT. It strikes me as odd that WisDOT has produced a State Highways Plan 2020, Airport System Plan 2020, Bicycle Transportation Plan 2020, the Wisconsin Pedestrian Policy Plan 2020, and a Wisconsin Rail Issues and Opportunities Report, but no comparable reports for local transportation, or intra-city or inter-city public transportation. WisDOT should round out the field of reports before moving on to a new methodology, especially when the existing planning reports have 'lines on maps' that can be pointed to as evidence for the need for a specific project, whereas no such figure exists for these other important modes.

Based on both the recent and long-term history of transportation funding in Wisconsin, it is important to recognize that Wisconsin faces a once-in-a-generation opportunity for transportation planning. For too many years now, Wisconsin has focused disproportionately on state highways, particularly expanding them, to the detriment of other modes such as buses and fixed guideway systems. The biggest problem herein relates to land use – highway expansion has never resulted in sustained congestion reduction and instead facilitates dispersed land use patterns and increased Vehicles Miles Traveled. On the other hand, public transportation investments concentrate development in existing communities, producing sustainable economic development and minimizing Vehicle Miles Traveled.

As we move into the 21st century it is imperative that we understand that along with the rest of the country and world, we here in Wisconsin are in an information age with a highly mobile, increasing diverse workforce, a growing population of aging adults and an evolving set of values. Vibrant communities, be they urban, suburban or rural, should be the end goal of our planning efforts. The planning, budgeting and construction of transportation facilities in particular need not be at odds with social justice, environmental quality, or, for that matter, sustainable economic development. Thus,

our first priority for WisDOT in its Connections 2030 planning effort is that the fundamental, underlying policy is that Wisconsin's transportation system in and of itself should not be the ends, but instead the means to supporting dynamic, healthy communities.

Wisconsin has an extensive system of 12,000 miles of state highways and nearly 100,000 miles of local roads and highways. For all practical purposes, our road and highway system is fully built out. Except for select areas that have been historically neglected or are currently facing massive changes in demographics or development pressures, we have reached the point where it is time to step back and focus on maintaining and repairing the existing systems. Contrary to the belief of interests committed to an endless cycle of congestion, highway capacity expansion and more congestion again, a continued focus on wholesale expansion of the existing system amounts to denial of the law of diminishing returns.

At some point WisDOT and others interested in transportation must realize two fundamental truths: 1) highways can only be expanded so much without inducing effects that are neither socially, fiscally or environmentally cost-effective; 2) widening highways provides capacity increases that are short-lived and often negligible in impact from the outset as land uses decentralize and a feedback cycle develops inducing more congestion and, in turn, more decentralized land use. Thus, in recognition of these truths, WisDOT's second underlying policy should be a recognition that, in regards to our road and highway network, Wisconsin will Fix-it-First – that is prioritize highway maintenance and repair before funding highway expansion.

Analysis of the last fifty years of land use and transportation patterns in Wisconsin, and the nation at large, confirm that a fundamental shift in how we understand transportation must occur. We must move away from understanding transportation principally as individuals driving single-occupant cars and commercial vehicles on congested roads and highways, with other modes as afterthoughts in all but the most dense communities. Instead, we must move towards understanding transportation as a diverse set of cost-effective, efficient and comfortable options that not only diversify mobility options, but at the same time optimize the economic, social, and environmental cost-benefit equations.

Over the last 15 years specifically, according to data in the WisDOT Office of Policy and Budget's *Transportation Budget Trends 2004*, Wisconsin's funding priorities have been out of step with the needs of the state – egregiously so. For instance, between FY 1990 and FY 2005, more than \$21 billion from the state budget will have been spent on highways and roads. Meanwhile, just \$1.5 billion will have been spent by the state on public transportation in that same period – just 7% of what was spent on roads and highways. Astonishingly, less than \$150 million will have been spent on elderly and disabled transportation. With the population of elderly residents expected to increase dramatically over the next decades, WisDOT cannot afford, and the state's residents cannot afford, to spend less than 1% as much on elderly and disabled transportation as it does on state highways.

By the very nature of these funding patterns – subsidizing highways and roads and underfunding other modes – state officials have created a downward spiral. That is, non-automobile modes do not

have the funding necessary to provide premium service, while roads and highways are funded at such a level that \$381 million in wasteful cost overruns can occur on just seven projects. Then, when an 'apples to oranges' comparison is made between highway and road performance versus public transportation performance, for instance, the built-in inequity ensures that highways and roads appear to be a better investment. This supposed performance differential suggests that funding for highways and roads is an investment with a high return and funding for public transportation is a subsidy for a flawed mode of transportation. In reality, the opposite appears to be closer to the truth, especially when one considers that at the minimum, investments in public transportation return the same amount per dollar to the economy, as do state highways – and most likely, significantly more. It is time to break the downward spiral. WisDOT's third underlying policy should be the full funding of a balanced transportation system – that is, providing funding equity across all modes of transportation.

Our transportation system is a public investment of monumental proportion and should not be controlled by special interests. One cannot look at Wisconsin transportation system, or the documents detailing its funding history, and in good conscience suggest that its funding has not been dominated by highway and roadbuilding interests. This planning process is a chance for WisDOT to address and attempt to shift priorities. We recognize that taking such a step will take considerable courage; however, now is the time to act.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with open-ended commentary on WisDOT's past and future planning and funding. If WisDOT opts to: 1) put communities first; 2) Fix-it-First; and 3) build a balanced transportation system, then it will have made great strides towards accomplishing its mission of ensuring safe, efficient, and beneficial mobility to all Wisconsin residents.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions, comments or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Ward Lyles', written in a cursive style.

Ward Lyles
Transportation Policy Director